

CODEL

Daschle to Central Asia

January 10 to 19, 2002

Senator Daschle led a bipartisan and bicameral Congressional Delegation (CODEL) to Germany, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan from January 10 to January 19. The following views expressed in this preliminary report, however, reflect only the views and findings of Senator Daschle.

Summary of Findings and Key Recommendations:

The initial phase of the war on terrorism has been a clear success

- It was evident from my trip to Central Asia that the conduct of the war on terrorism has, to date, produced impressive results. Our troops, President Bush, Secretary Rumsfeld, and Secretary Powell deserve credit and recognition for that success.



U.S. troops are a credit to themselves and the country

- The performance of U.S. troops in Central Asia and Afghanistan has been remarkable and a tribute to the hard work and commitment of the thousands of men and women who are carrying out Operation Enduring Freedom. U.S. personnel are braving harsh weather and very rudimentary accommodations. One Air Force Sergeant said he “had been living in the mud” in Uzbekistan for three months, further saying he was honored to be doing so. An Army Colonel in Afghanistan, while eating chicken Chow Mein for the fourth night in a row, observed, “I can’t complain, because it’s hot [food].” Another Army PFC declared he was proud to have spent the past three months serving in Afghanistan, notwithstanding the fact that he was deployed to the region one week after moving into a new house with his new wife. The morale of U.S. troops is very high, as evidenced by another Army PFC from South Dakota who has not had leave since February 2000 and volunteered to serve in Uzbekistan as he was finishing a tour of duty in Bosnia because he was eager to participate in the war against terrorism.



- The U.S. personnel from other U.S. agencies in the region are also a credit to America. Foreign Service officers in Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan are working around the clock – literally – to advance U.S. interests and ensure the safety of American personnel. The Embassy in Tashkent is overcrowded, the Embassy in Kabul is in terrible straits after being overrun by decades of war, and families of personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad were forced to return to the U.S. as a result of security threats.
- On a more personal note, I was proud to meet a number of South Dakotan servicemen and women who are serving their country in the region. To a person, they support the mission and take pride in the role they are playing to improve living conditions in the region and defeat international terrorism.



- I was also very proud of the generosity of South Dakotans was greatly appreciated by Afghans. The delegation delivered three boxes of winter clothing to the Afghan Minister of Orphans, Widows and Martyrs. The clothing was collected by South Dakotan business leaders and students at two elementary schools.



The troops success allow us to focus on consolidating gains.

- The successful effort that started as a war in Afghanistan to bring to justice those responsible for the September 11th attacks is shifting to focus on consolidating gains and helping to bring some semblance of economic, political, and physical security to the region. Challenges are many, but the United States undertook a remarkable effort to confront and defeat the first such challenge – widespread hunger.



- A remarkable U.S.-led effort to deliver food and shelter has averted humanitarian disaster, which last fall, after years of mismanagement by the Taliban, looked inevitable. But the USG – led by the Department of Defense and USAID with significant assistance from CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Church World Services, International Rescue Committee, and others – provided nearly \$200 million worth of food, water, health care and shelter to millions of Afghans in FY 2002.
- Challenges remain. It is particularly troubling that Bin Laden, the bulk of the senior Al Qaeda leadership, Mullah Omar and the majority of the Taliban leadership remain at large.

- The fact that so many key terrorist leaders are unaccounted for is one factor that contributes to insecurity in Afghanistan, which is increasingly threatening the gains the United States has made in the region. At the time of the trip to Afghanistan, Chairman Karzai and U.S. personnel in the region were clearly concerned about security. Events since the delegation's visit to Afghanistan – such as the fights between warlords in Gardez, the murder of the interim tourism minister, and increasingly alarming reports out of the Administration about a general rise of lawlessness and warlordism, including a specific report that some warlords may be preparing to sabotage the *loya jirga* set for June – only serve to harden that assessment.



- The current configuration of the International Security Force (ISAF) is insufficient to confront this insecurity. At the very least, the ISAF should be expanded beyond Kabul and into other Afghan cities until efforts to train a police force and an Afghan military loyal to the interim government can catch up with this insecurity. While success of the ISAF is not dependent on the U.S. providing ground troops as part of an expanded effort, it is clear that an American component for transportation, intelligence and search-and-rescue is likely to be a precondition for significant international participation in an expanded ISAF.

- An increased U.S. military role in support of an expanded ISAF is entirely consistent with the Administration's apparent policy goal of maintaining a U.S. presence in the region, evidenced by the substantial upgrades beginning at Manas Airport in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and a more permanent presence being prepared in Uzbekistan and Georgia. This increased American military presence can play an important role in support of the ISAF.

Central Asian Republics have taken significant steps in support of the U.S. – and are urging a long term American presence in return.

- Good long term relations with the Central Asian Republics is very much in the national interest of the United States.
- Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and even Turkmenistan have demonstrated, with their efforts in Afghanistan, a solid commitment to the war against terrorism.
- Uzbekistan agreed to our request for basing and overflight rights, including the right for the United States to maintain a significant troop presence at the airfield at Khanabad. As a result, our two countries signed an Status of Forces Agreement on October 7 and a Memorandum of Understanding on Economic Cooperation on November 7. Last fall, the U.S. also allocated an additional \$100 m in assistance for Uzbekistan, and the Administration is reported to be considering an additional tranche of assistance in a supplemental for "front line states" expected to be submitted to Congress in mid-to-late March.



- The Government of Uzbekistan has also provided important cooperation with U.S. programs to curb the proliferation of material for use in weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The October 22 agreement between the U.S. and Uzbekistan to begin cleaning up the former Soviet biological weapons test range on Vozrozhdeniya in the Aral Sea is an important step forward in U.S. efforts to halt the proliferation of WMD material. The Government of Uzbekistan also ought to be commended for efforts, supported by the U.S., at strengthening border controls of weapons material.

- Kyrgyzstan provided overflight and landing rights and agreed to permit the basing of a large number of coalition personnel and aircraft at the international airport in Manas, a site which will function as a "transportation hub" for coalition efforts in Afghanistan and the region.
- Turkmenistan has allowed for some overflight rights and became an important – indeed the principal – conduit of American and international humanitarian assistance into northern Afghanistan.



These steps represent a move toward the West, but sustaining positive long term relationships still demand major improvements on political and economic reform

- Each country claimed that they had made a deliberate and conscious choice to reach out to the West. What is not clear is whether the governments are also committed to embracing universal human and voting rights that have been sorely lacking in each country.
- While the U.S. is right to continue cooperating with these governments, significant and sustained economic and political reforms are a pre-requisite to consolidating long term relationships with these countries.
- Each country's continuing refusal to enact political reform while at the same time continuing to violate basic human rights will contribute to extremism and threaten the stability that each government argues it is seeking.
- The human rights situation in Uzbekistan is abysmal. There is no freedom of association and independent institutions – including the press – are banned. In one telling moment, a human rights leader in Uzbekistan said that the media in Russia – currently being cracked down on by government regulators – is much more free than the Uzbek media. Even the Parliament is largely a rubber stamp for the Karimov government, with little, if any, influence.
- Civil society in Uzbekistan has also been drastically restricted. NGOs are not allowed to register or function. The few independent groups that do exist are subjected to harassment based on Soviet practices, including firing “agitators” from state run jobs, confiscating human rights workers passports, confiscating equipment of independent NGOs. Human rights leaders and the U.S. State Department also catalogued instances where the government used torture and prolonged detention to deter other civil society activity.
- In Kyrgyzstan, where the United States encouraged the government's bold steps in the early and mid-1990s toward democratization, there has been a dramatic backsliding in its political reform process. Of particular concern are reports of constant pressure on opposition political parties, harassment of journalists who criticized members of the government, and numerous flaws – many apparently deliberate – in the October 29, 2000 presidential elections. In fact, the Office for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights concluded that the October elections “failed to comply with OSCE commitments for democratic elections.”
- In Turkmenistan, there are no legally registered opposition parties and absolutely no free press. The State Department reports that the most recent elections, in December 1999, “did not even approach minimum international standards.” The only officially recognized religions are the Russian Orthodox church and Sunni Islamism; all other faiths face harsh persecution and harassment. In what seems to be a fitting moniker, several analysts refer to insular Turkmenistan as the North Korea of Central Asia. Furthermore, while the leaders of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan at least admitted to having significant human rights problems, the National Security Adviser of Turkmenistan simply dismissed concerns about human rights saying, “I understand that these things [freedom of religion, the media and association] are important for America, but it is simply not time for such reforms in Turkmenistan. Before we do these things, we need time to strengthen our economy.”



HIV/AIDS is a growing threat in Central Asia

- The leadership of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan noted their concern regarding the trafficking of Afghan opium to and through their countries, which has contributed to large increases in illicit drug use throughout Central Asia in recent years. According to UNAIDS, this surge in drug use has brought the Central Asian republics to the “verge of a major public health and socio-economic development disaster, in terms of large scale epidemics of HIV/AIDS.” As such, the United States should be looking for opportunities to increase funding for bilateral AIDS prevention, care and treatment programs targeted to Central Asia and to increase the annual U.S. commitment to the Global Trust Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and malaria.

Pakistan and President Musharraf are also making a strategic choice to join the West. Concrete steps to confirm and reward that choice will be welcomed

- Pakistan has been a vital ally in the war against terrorism. With its location in a critical region of the world, a nuclear arsenal, and a population set to double in the next twenty years, American national security is undoubtedly improved by President Musharraf’s strategic choice.
- The January 12 speech by President Musharraf – in which he proclaimed a jihad against extremism – demonstrates that he is ready to take Pakistan back from the extremists. He outlined a far reaching proposal for reforming the Pakistani educational system and a systematic crackdown on extremists. Although ultimate success in this effort can only be judged by results, initial efforts suggest that he is committed to this effort.
- He has specifically requested U.S. support for reforms to the Pakistani education system, which has been ignored by previous Pakistani governments more interested in investing in weapons systems than social services. The United States should support that effort with significant new resources, closely conditioned on President Musharraf maintaining his commitment to reform. There can be no better investment of U.S. assistance in Pakistan.
- President Musharraf’s comments about and concrete steps to reform the ISI given widespread reports of its links to extremists are also a reason for optimism. He should be commended for his cooperation on the investigation of the kidnapping and brutal murder of Danny Pearl case. However, as with his speech on fighting extremism, the USG must demand concrete results in this investigation. President Musharraf’s seriousness about confronting Islamic extremists – including those responsible for the murder of Pearl – can be further confirmed by Pakistan handing over to the United States Sheikh Omar, the confessed mastermind of the abduction.



Germany taking concrete – and costly – steps in the war on terrorism, but it is concerned about next steps

- German Foreign Minister Fischer referred to the war on terrorism as a fight with a “new totalitarianism.” In a war with such extremists, there can be no compromise, just as there could be no compromise with the Nazis.
- Germans also reserved blunt language for the conduct of the Saudis in this effort against extremism – “democracy is the necessary pre-condition of defeating terrorism” – and for the lack of concerted effort by Palestinian Authority Chairman Arafat – the decision to start the Intifada in September 2000 was judged an “historic mistake”, and “we all may have overestimated how much Arafat wants peace.”
- Germany has taken seriously its role in this war against totalitarianism, taking concrete and historic steps in the war in Afghanistan and in the law enforcement and investigation efforts in the United States. Germany has deployed troops to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom and in Kabul with the ISAF and German naval vessels are operating in the Indian Ocean off the Horn of Africa as part of international efforts to stop the flow of arms to Somalia.
- Just as remarkably, Germany has provided intensive law enforcement cooperation in the investigation of the September 11 attacks. German cooperation has been pivotal to initial success in the United States, including the indictment of Zacarias Moussaoui.
- While it does not see another state that has sponsored terrorism to the extent that Afghanistan did, the German government recognizes clearly that this is going to be a “long term war” and appears to be ready to make further contributions to that effort. In particular, the German leadership pointed out Iran – and its clear desire for WMD – as a problem that the west will have to confront.
- Given the extent of German cooperation in the first phase of the war against terrorism – and the political price paid by the German government – it was interesting to hear the serious concerns expressed by from the German officials about the next phases in the war.
- German Government officials noted especially the threat posed by Saddam Hussein – both to his own people and, with his interest in developing weapons of mass destruction, to the region, Europe and the United States.
- These officials also noted, however, that forcing military action in Iraq without prior consultation with, if not outright support from, the international community risks a potentially even more threatening set of circumstances in the Gulf with negative impacts on energy security as well as the security of Israel.